

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MATTERS

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET

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Fairfax County Expands Benchmarking Horizons

Over the past three years, as performance measurement in Fairfax County has evolved with agencies identifying key measures for planning, budgeting, and accountability, another piece of the puzzle has been *what to do with that information once you gather it*. We can look at trends over time – how is the agency doing this year compared to last year or the year before? However, to fully realize some of the benefits of performance measurement, we have to look beyond our boundaries at how others are performing similar services.

However, these comparisons can often be difficult and time-consuming. Fairfax County learned this through a limited effort by the Regional Performance Measurement Consortium to benchmark a baker's dozen of measures. Much discussion ensued about definitions and the variance among jurisdictions, even for what we thought were relatively straightforward measures. The first year was a learning experience and the Consortium anticipates it will be easier the second time around. Nevertheless, it does take considerable time, commitment, energy, and expertise to sustain a successful benchmarking effort over time.

For that reason, Fairfax County has joined the International City and County Management Association's (ICMA) Center for Performance Measurement to benchmark against approximately 120 other jurisdictions, many of which are large cities and counties. ICMA started the Center in 1994 as a consortium of 44 jurisdictions, each with a population of at least 200,000, and has spent the subsequent years refining the data definitions and collection techniques.

There are four major service areas that are benchmarked as part of the ICMA initiative: Police, Fire/EMS, Neighborhood Services, and Support Services. These

areas were selected because they comprise a large portion of local governments' budgets and represent a good opportunity for comparison. In the Police service area, measures such as deterrence, patrol, and criminal investigations are used. For Fire/EMS, community risk is examined, as are the effectiveness of fire suppression and emergency medical services. Neighborhood Services encompass functions such as solid waste collection, parks and recreation, libraries, and code enforcement, among other measures. And Support Services include internal functions such as purchasing, fleet management, information technology, human resources, and facilities management.

By early fall, staff from affected agencies will receive training from ICMA on how to complete the templates, which will be due late fall. Looking further down the road, Fairfax County will have access to data from other continuous improvement-oriented jurisdictions and the opportunity to participate in discussions of "best practices" and other effective management techniques.

ON EXCELLENCE

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an art, but a habit.

— Aristotle



"DOES IT MATTER?" GOAL SETTING FOR ORGANIZATIONS

By Laura Golberg
Department of Information Technology

In the first article in this series, "Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing," we discussed identifying an organization's mission. This one addresses setting goals that work toward fulfilling that mission. Goals are the next strategic level after mission, which is the broad statement of why an agency exists. Goals provide a framework within which programs operate. A goal statement speaks generally toward end-results rather than specific actions. Working downward in this strategic model

of: mission, goals, objectives, and indicators, future articles will discuss measurement based on these goals.

In late May, we were privileged to have Dr. Susan Allan, Health Department Director for Arlington County, address the Regional Performance Measurement Consortium on the subject of Public Health Performance Measures. Although her focus was on public health, she made a number of excellent points in regard to general goal-setting and performance measures. Her overall message was that goals must answer the question "Does it matter?" We can certainly measure things that are generally thought to be key indicators such as infant mortality, but if the occurrence is so small as to be almost statistically insignificant, what does that really tell us other than only a very small group is affected. Along those lines, we may not be so worried about the occurrence of teen pregnancy among 18-19 year olds as we would be with younger age groups. The goal-setting should take a targeted approach to address the area of greatest concern to the community.

Goal-setting recalls a discussion I had with a teenager about setting goals at a time in her life when she was somewhat adrift. After considerable time and thought, she told me that her goal is to be a designer. Now, over three years later, she is still pursuing her goal which is leading to decisions about college and jobs. This young woman chose a long-term goal that is fundamental to who she is, and because of that she has been able to translate it into **concrete** action and achievements.

So too, organizational goals must be fundamental to an agency's mission and must be translatable into concrete action. A goal selected by a DIT Division, relating to the organizational goals, states "To provide reliable and responsive services to support present and future IT systems' demands on the IT infrastructure." This matters every time you use your computer as an internal customer and when citizens pay taxes over the Internet (external customers). The goals of all County agencies must matter and should be developed to reflect the needs of those customers, whether they are internal or external.

Goals must address the mission, the needs of the agency, and be in line with
(continued on next page)

"Does It Matter?" (continued)

other agency goals, either explicitly stated or implicit in the agency's efforts. For example, some employees will be setting their own goals as part of the new Pay for Performance system. Individual goals should relate to agency goals. For example, one of DIT's goals is to "develop and maintain a technically skilled staff...." Many individual goals in DIT will probably address this issue—how DIT staff will acquire skills and grow in their profession. By tying individual goals to agency goals, the organization increases its chances for success.

If anyone has examples of how you developed goals that matter, that are central to addressing the mission of your agency, and will have an important impact on those we serve, or on the County government itself, please e-mail me at LGOLBE so we can share them with other County staff. Comments on this article series would also be much appreciated.

Performance Measurement in the Coming Months

Summer may be here, with thoughts of vacation and taking it easy. But performance measurement (PM) cannot take a break. A number of PM-related initiatives will continue over the summer. One of these involves the development of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Countywide performance measurement database. It is expected to be on the street in August with bids due in the fall. At that time, a Selection Advisory Committee consisting of staff from the PM Team, and the Departments of Management and Budget and Information Technology will evaluate the proposals and make a recommendation. The database is needed to manage a large volume of data for better analysis to enhance managers' use of the information for continuous improvement efforts.

Additionally, staff from the Office of Internal Audit will be contacting various agencies to review their performance

measurement data to ensure its reliability, consistency, and overall integrity. Since much of this information is published in the annual budget document, it is absolutely critical that the data be reliable or the County's integrity will be questioned. In past years, agencies that have undergone such a review by Internal Audit have indicated that it is not a difficult process and in fact, that it helped them look at their measures in a new light.

As agencies jump feet-first into development of their FY 2002 Budget requests, performance measures remain a critical component. The fourth edition of *Fairfax County Measures Up* will be issued in July; however, it is important to note that the same methodology adopted four years ago remains the guiding principle. Agencies will be encouraged to fine-tune various measures as appropriate, and will be required to submit performance measurement justification for any and all

addendum requests. If a position or program is important enough to request, agencies should be able to document the effect it will have on the citizens we serve.

Finally as August rolls around, the bimonthly brownbag lunch series will continue on Thursday, August 3, 2000 at noon in Room 120C. Laura Golberg will lead a discussion on Working Across Boundaries (including how to overcome obstacles).

Ideas? Questions?

If there are any topics of interest you would like to see addressed in future issues of this PM Newsletter, please forward your suggestions or questions to Barbara Emerson in the Department of Management and Budget (e-mail BEMERS).

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TEAM

The April 2000 issue of this newsletter issued a call for new PM Team members to actively participate on the Team. This is not a ceremonial role. It is one where agency staff regularly meet to discuss the direction of performance measurement in Fairfax County and what we can all do to further that goal. Another important aspect of participation is developing additional capacity for understanding what performance measurement is and how we can all use it to continuously improve operations in our agencies. The staff listed below have expressed a commitment to these principles and will actively participate and represent their agencies on the Team from July 2000 through June 2001. Please feel free to contact them if you have any questions or input to share.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Evan Braff	Department of Community and Recreation Services
Barbara Emerson	Department of Management and Budget, Coordinator
Mike Finkle	Housing and Community Development
Laura Golberg	Department of Information Technology
Norm Graves	Department of Tax Administration
Liz Henry	Department of Family Services
Susan Herbert	Fire and Rescue Department
Chuck Higdon	Department of Vehicle Services
Rose Hill-Evans	Department of Finance
George Hohmann	Department of Management and Budget
Ed Jones	DPWES, Sewer Operation and Maintenance
Doug Miller	Fairfax County Public Library
Captain Chuck Peters	Police Department
Laurie Shertzer	Fire and Rescue Department
Liz Smolen	DPWES, Division of Solid Waste
Cathy Spage	DPWES, Business Planning and Support
Steve Springer	Department of Human Resources

MORE ON EXCELLENCE

Good, better, best; never let it rest till your good is better and your better is best.
Unknown



Visit the PM Website:

<http://infoweb.co.fairfax.va.us/OMB/pfmeasure.htm>



Performance Measurement Matters is published quarterly by the PM Team. Editor: Barbara Emerson, Technical Support by Frann Shurnitski, Department of Management and Budget. Advisory staff: Sara Simmons, Department of Planning and Zoning.